Tolman Expectancy Theory

The Expectancy Theory of Motivation is best described as a process theory. With research pioneered by Edward C. Tolman and continued by Victor H. Vroom, Expectancy Theory provides an explanation of why individuals choose one behavioral option over others. The idea with this theory is that people are motivated to do something because they think their actions will lead to their desired outcome (Redmond, 2009). "Expectancy theory proposes that work motivation is dependent upon the perceived association between performance and outcomes and individuals modify their behavior based on their calculation of anticipated outcomes" (Chen & Fang, 2008). In other words, it can help explain why a person performs at a particular level.

The theory states that individuals have different sets of goals and can be motivated if they believe that:

- There is a positive correlation between efforts and performance.
- Favorable performance will result in a desirable reward.
- The reward will satisfy an important need.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory addresses motivation and management. The theory suggests that an individual's perceived view of an outcome will determine the level of motivation. It assumes that choices being made maximize pleasure and minimize pain. This is also seen in the Law of Effect, "one of the principles of reinforcement theory, which states that people engage in behaviors that have pleasant outcomes and avoid behaviors that have unpleasant outcomes" (Thorndike, 1913).

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Vroom theorized that the source of motivation in Expectancy Theory is a "multiplicative function of valence, instrumentality and expectancy." (Stecher & Rosse, 2007). He suggested that "people consciously chose a particular course of action, based upon perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs as a consequence of their desires to enhance pleasure and avoid pain" (Vroom, 1964).

Vroom's Expectancy Theory is based on these three components:

- Expectancy:
  Expectancy can be described as the belief that higher or increased effort will yield better performance. This can be explained by the thinking of "If I work harder, I will make something better".
  Conditions that enhance expectancy include having the correct resources available, having the required skill set for the job at hand, and having the necessary support to get the job done correctly.

- Instrumentality:
  Instrumentality can be described as the thought that if an individual performs well, then a valued outcome will come to that individual. Some things that help instrumentality are having a clear understanding of the relationship between performance and the outcomes, having trust and respect for people who make the decisions on who gets what reward, and seeing transparency in the process of who gets what reward.

- Valence:
  Valence means "value" and refers to beliefs about outcome desirability (Redmond, 2010). There are individual differences in the level of value associated with any specific outcome. For instance, a bonus may not increase motivation for an employee who is motivated by formal recognition or by increased status such as promotion. Valence can be thought of as the pressure or importance that a person puts on an expected outcome.

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